

REVIEW

Christophe Batsch, *La guerre et les rites de guerre dans le judaïsme du deuxième Temple* (*Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. 93), Brill: Leiden – Boston 2005, 491 pp.; ISBN 90 04 13897 8; ISSN 1384–2161.

The history of biblical Israel is fraught with wars and conflicts, hence it is hardly surprising that they became the subject of many studies. By contrast, scholars show much less interest in the field in the almost 600-year-long period of the Second Temple. Although we have comprehensive studies of respective historical events (cf. B. Bar-Kochva, *Judas Maccabaeus. The Jewish Struggle against the Seleucids*, Cambridge 1989 [paperback 2002]), or various aspects of the Jewish military history in the period, as seen through the lens of the Dead Sea Scrolls, among others, there is still no synthesis available that would encompass all these issues.

To believe that the book by C. Batsch is such a long-awaited compendium is to be in error. Although the title begins with a word “la guerre,” or war, the author shows interest primarily in its theological, not historical dimension. His focus is not on any specific armed conflict, but rather on the way how war was perceived by various Jewish authors and on Jewish religious rituals connected with war. The book is based on the author’s doctoral dissertation in religious studies, hence his research methods and presentation are proper for this type of study.

The discussion is divided into ten chapters subjects devoted to selected problems: I. *Impureté de la guerre, sainteté du camp de guerre* (pp. 41–71); II. *Pureté des guerriers, rites de purification* (pp. 72–116); III. *Le sacerdoce (1): La mobilisation des prêtres du deuxième Temple* (pp. 117–164); IV. *Le sacerdoce (2): l’alternative de Qoumrân* (pp. 165–209); V. *Trompettes et étendards* (pp. 210–246); VI. *La guerre en sabbat* (pp. 247–307); VII. *Ourîm et Toummîm* (pp. 308–343); VIII. *Les sacrifices de guerre (1): sacrifices sanglants et sacrifices humains* (pp. 344–372); IX. *Les sacrifices (2): le souffle, la graisse, le sang* (pp. 373–407); X. *Les sacrifices de guerre (3): anathème ou herêm* (pp. 408–446). Preceding those is a chapter-length introduction (*Introduction*, pp. 1–39) discussing the classification of wars in Jewish tradition.

Batsch’s source base is made up primarily of apocryphal and pseudepigraphic literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Yet in search for arguments to support his proposed interpretations, the author steps beyond theological texts and cites those describing historical events: the First and Second Book of the Maccabees and works by Josephus Flavius. Based on an in-depth analysis of such sources, the author arrives at the correct conclusion that the biblical tradition, despite a radical change in social and religious realities in the period of the Second Temple, determined the views of all authors active at the time. C. Batsch has also proved that the picture of armed conflicts, the war

rhetoric, and the frequent references to the military religious ritual in religious texts have nothing to do with war propaganda as they provided a background against which a vision of an eschatological conflict could be shown.

C. Batsch's book will certainly disappoint all those who were looking for answers about specific armed conflicts where Jews participated and about military realities involved. Yet despite its difficult, digressive, theologically scrupulous discourse, it deserves careful attention as it permits a new, deeper insight into known events.

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